



Seychelles

International Religious Freedom Report 2005

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 444 square miles, and its population is approximately 82,500. According to a 2005 estimate by the Ministry of Information Technology and Communication, about 82 percent of the population is Roman Catholic and 6 percent is Anglican. There are other Christian churches, including Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal Church, the Pentecostal Assembly, the Nazarites, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Hinduism, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith also are practiced.

A few foreign missionary groups practice in the country, including the Missionaries of Charity, which is a Roman Catholic organization.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

The Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Seventh-day Adventist churches, Islamic mosques, and Baha'i local spiritual assembly have individual acts of incorporation. Other churches that are not corporate bodies are registered as associations with the Registrar General and are entitled to tax-free privileges, similar to a charity. All religious organizations must register to be entitled to tax-free privileges. If an organization does not want tax-free privileges, it is not required to register.

The Government tends to remain uninvolved with religious matters, but it provides program time to different religious organizations on the national radio broadcasting service. On Sundays, a radio broadcast of a Catholic Mass alternates each week with a broadcast of an Anglican service. The Islam and Hindu faiths are allowed 15-minute broadcasts every Friday, and the Baha'i and Seventh-day Adventist faiths are allowed 15-minute broadcasts every Saturday.

Government employees of all faiths can request paid leave on any of their holy days, and such leave generally is granted. The majority of government ministers are Catholic.

The Roman Catholic holy days of Good Friday, Easter, Corpus Christi, Assumption of Mary, All Saints' Day, and Christmas are national holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In the past, the Government did not demonstrate favoritism toward one religion over another; however, in 2003 the Government

gave a grant of \$400,000 (2 million Seychelles rupees) to the Anglican Church to construct a new cathedral, and \$400,000 to the Roman Catholic Church. In 2004, the Baie Sainte Anne Church, a Catholic church, was awarded \$200,000 (1 million Seychelles rupees) for major renovation works.

According to the Government, a portion of the national budget is periodically allocated to provide assistance to faiths that request financial support at the beginning of each year. In the past, Baha'i and Hindu groups have benefited from these grants, which are awarded on a case-by-case basis and based on the availability of budgeted funds.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Abuses by Terrorist Organizations

There were no reported abuses targeted at specific religions by terrorist organizations during the period covered by this report.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

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